

TAO IN THE WINTER MOUNTAINS

-- for Ezra Pound

Source

Thought stirs

the empty source pools
of Lao Tzu
empty but full
wordless
w/out rippling.

Siegeboats on a milkbowl

lake, each prow moves
effortless
through ruined cliffs
of mist, wordless clouds
illusions of language:
now "heart"
now tangled "tree"
now nothing.

Paddlers dip the dawn
remembering Ch'in
whose bronze
kings and courtesans
whose tattered banners
decompose in dust.

Paddlers dip the dawn pools of Lao Tzu
& water runs w/out sound
down cliff after cliff.

Five Tributaries of Lao

I. "Dumb"

Fish leap upstream to their
deaths. Tao takes them
in effortless nets:
takes the sun-stroked salmon,
the straw things and humanists.
Takes the dialectic.
Chu Ta saw it best;
lopped up Buddha
burned the robes and bowl
let his hair grow long
took the onyx pin
painting "dumb" on the door
way. Sd painter Chu Ta
that was my best effort.
The rest he gave away.
That's Tao (1626 - 1706).